



## Hair Loss

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*Hair follicle cells grow and divide rapidly. Hair loss can occur when chemotherapy drugs break down rapidly dividing cells. Hair loss is called alopecia (al-o-pee-she-ah).*

### General information

- Hair loss is temporary.
- It may occur on any part of the body (scalp, beard, legs, arms, pubic area, eyebrows and eyelashes).
- It may occur as mild thinning or complete hair loss.
- Hair loss may begin within a week of your first chemotherapy treatment or after several cycles.
- Hair may grow back during chemotherapy or after it is completed.
- New hair may be a different color and/or texture when it grows back. Initial hair growth is usually fine and may break easily.

### Hygiene precautions:

- Comb hair with a wide-toothed comb. Minimize trauma to the hair and scalp. Avoid perms, highlights, tight ponytails, hair dryers, hot rollers, and curling irons.
- If hair is long, consider cutting it into a shorter style. Long hair increases pulling and tangles, which may increase the rate of hair loss.
- Avoid excessive shampooing and combing.
- Use a mild shampoo followed by cream rinse or hair conditioner every 3 to 5 days. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry.
- Use a cream or lotion if your scalp is dry.
- Protect scalp from sun exposure. Wear a protective head covering and use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 15 or more when outdoors.

- More support:** Attend a support group such as the American Cancer Society’s “Look Good, Feel Better” program. The class includes tips on
- makeup and jewelry application
  - use of hats, scarves, and turbans
  - wig selection

Your doctor will give you a prescription for a wig. A wig request can be obtained from your social worker.



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

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